

PROCEEDINGS AND ADDRESSES

ATTENDING THE PRESENTATION OF A
SILVER CENTRE-PIECE—REPRESENTING
AN ANCIENT AZTEC TEOCALLI—TO THE
AZTEC CLUB, AT ITS ANNUAL MEETING, IN
NEW YORK CITY, OCTOBER 13TH, 1892, BY
COL. DE LANCEY FLOYD-JONES, U.S. ARMY





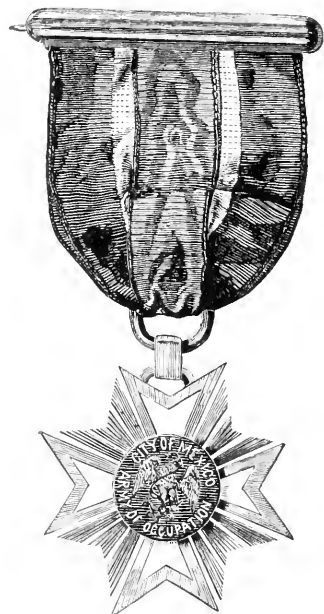
Delancey Floyd-Jones

With kind regards, of your comrade,
The Author.

Please acknowledge }
Union Club. N.Y.C. }
1893 }

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NEW YORK
PRESS OF J. J. LITTLE & CO.

2-20 ASTOR PLACE

1892

Gift
Mrs. William Jones
1915

AT the forty-fifth meeting of the Aztec Club, held at Sherry's, in New York City, on the afternoon of October 13, 1892, and in due course of business, the following letter was read by Colonel Floyd-Jones:

“AZTEC CLUB, 37th Street and Fifth Avenue,
NEW YORK CITY, *October 13, 1892.*”

“*To the Officers and Members of the AZTEC CLUB:*”

“GENTLEMEN: I take pleasure in presenting to this Club a souvenir in the form of a centre-piece for your dining table, which, I trust, will serve as a reminder of the land where this Club had its birth. The idea is taken from the design on the Club's diploma, and has been carried out by Tiffany & Company. It represents an ancient Aztec *teocalli* (God's house), from which are growing plants common to Mexico, conspicuous among which are several varieties of cacti, the *agave Americana*, or *pulque* plant, and the royal palm.

“To those of us who had the good fortune of serving in that country, this design will readily recall old associations and pleasant memories; and to those who are gradually filling our places it may commend itself as a work of art, and possibly may be the means of inducing some to visit the beautiful country of the ancient Aztecs. Should it have the effect of adding in any manner greater interest in this Club, my object will be fully accomplished.

“I now leave the token for your acceptance and enlightened criticism, with the hope that all who are present to-day, and our absent comrades as well, may long be spared to gather about it from year to year, and renew around the flowing bowl the memory of those days when we roved among the royal palms, drank the juice of the *maguey*, stood at the foot of

ancient teocalli ruins, and let our fancy fly back to the olden time when their tops smoked with the blood and ashes of human sacrifice.

“Yours very cordially,

“DE LANCEY FLOYD-JONES,

“*Colonel U. S. Army (retired).*”

Professor Henry Coppée, having been designated by President Porter a committee of one to draft the proper preamble and resolutions for accepting the centre-piece, reported the following, which were unanimously adopted :

“AZTEC CLUB, 37th Street and Fifth Avenue,
NEW YORK, *October 13, 1892.*

“*Minute of Record.*—The beautiful and appropriate silver centre-piece, presented at this meeting to the Aztec Club of 1847 by our friend and comrade Colonel De Lancey Floyd-Jones, deserves special notice in our records. It was a generous thought in him to make us such a handsome present; it was a happy thought to take for its subject such a reminiscence of ancient Mexico, a ruined temple, the like of which many of us saw in our sojourn there, and a drawing of which is at the head of our diplomas.

“The care which he has bestowed, and the charming taste he has displayed in the execution of this work, especially in encircling it with tropical foliage, add at once to its intrinsic and memorial value. His letter of presentation contains all that need be said by way of preliminary, and to elicit our thanks. Later it is hoped that he will give us additional information with regard to it. Meantime it is the duty and great pleasure of the Club to place upon the record of this meeting the following resolutions :

“*Resolved,* That the hearty thanks of the Aztec Club are eminently due, and are hereby offered, to Colonel De Lancey Floyd-Jones, for his generous and tasteful gift of a silver centre-piece representing an ancient Mexican teocalli in ruins.

"*Resolved*, That his letter accompanying the gift be spread upon the minutes of the Club, and Colonel Floyd-Jones be requested to give us further information of Aztec ruins, etc.

"*Resolved*, That the centre-piece be always placed upon the table at our annual and other banquets, and that it shall be confided to the keeping of the Treasurer.

"*Resolved*, That an engrossed copy of this minute and these resolutions be sent by the Secretary to Colonel Floyd-Jones."

In reply to the *Minute of Record*, Colonel Floyd-Jones briefly expressed his high appreciation of the cordial manner in which his present had been received, and added that he had prepared a paper, chiefly relating to the Aztecs, which he would read to them at the banquet in the evening.

The banquet in the evening was held at Sherry's, and was attended by the following members, viz. :

General Fitz-John Porter, *President*,
 General Stewart Van Vliet, *Vice-President*,
 Colonel De Lancey Floyd-Jones, *Treasurer*,
 General Z. B. Tower,
 General Rufus Ingalls,
 Admiral Alexander C. Rhind,
 General C. C. Augur,
 General James Oakes,
 General James B. Fry,
 General D. M. Frost,
 Professor Henry Coppée, LL.D.,
 Colonel Thomas Y. Field,
 Colonel Frank Huger,
 Colonel George B. McClellan,
 Captain Henry P. Kingsbury,
 Lieutenant Richard G. Davenport,
 Mr. Augustus Porter Barnard,
 Mr. John H. Barnard,
 Mr. Charles Biddle,
 Mr. John Winter Brannan,
 Mr. Edward H. Floyd-Jones,
 Mr. Graham Frost,

Mr. J. A. Hays,
 Mr. Winfield Scott Hoyt,
 Mr. J. Watts Kearny.

And the following guests :

General John M. Schofield, Commanding U. S. Army,
 Major Clifton Comly,
 Mr. Edward Floyd De Lancey,
 Mr. Charles B. Fosdick.

After the dinner and while enjoying the wine and cigars, General Porter toasted Colonel Floyd-Jones, and asked him to comply with the request, as made in the resolutions at the business meeting, to which the colonel responded as follows :

Mr. President and Comrades of the AZTEC CLUB :

In rising to respond to your toast, I feel that I cannot fully convey my grateful thanks for the warm terms and kind words in which the Aztec Club has received this centre-piece, representing an ancient Aztec teocalli, and I am afraid that I have not words which will adequately express my feelings; but rest assured that I shall prize more than I can tell the engrossed copy of the *Minute of Record* which the Secretary has been requested to furnish me, and which conveys in such agreeable terms your appreciation of this gift.

In regard to the subject upon which I propose speaking this evening, as requested in one of your resolutions, and which chiefly relates to the Aztecs, I fear that our worthy President, General Fitz-John Porter, has, in his introductory remarks, raised your expectations too high, but on one point you can rest assured, I shall aim not to tire by too long a talk.

And first, I think it appropriate to allude to the origin of this Club, which was started in the City of Mexico, on the 13th of October, 1847, within a month after the occupation of that city by the army under General Scott. Hence the date we celebrate is the anniversary of the foundation of this club in Mexico. We formerly kept the 14th of September, the date on which the city fell into our hands, but it was thought that the later date was more appropriate, and hence the 13th of

October was adopted. Some resort of this description seemed essential to the officers stationed in the capital, as a promoter of good-fellowship, and as furnishing a home where they could pass their spare hours in social intercourse; and also as giving them a restaurant where more palatable and healthful viands could be procured and at a much less price than at the best *fondas* of the city.

As far as I have been able to learn, the chief promoters of it were General Charles F. Smith, Colonel John B. Grayson, General John B. Magruder, General Robert Buchanan, General Charles P. Stone, and Professor Henry Coppée, all of the regular army, and General Franklin Pierce of the volunteers, afterwards President of the United States. I have given the highest rank to which these officers attained, for at the date of our organization scarcely any were above the rank of captain. General Winfield Scott and Chaplain M. McCartney were the only honorary members elected, and the former proved an excellent friend of the Club, the supplies for which were largely brought from New Orleans, and introduced without duty, or the expense of ocean freight or land carriage, from Vera Cruz up to the city. The initiation fee was \$20. I have not been able to learn that any annual dues were exacted.

The original home of the Club was a handsome one, as it occupied the splendid mansion of Señor Boca Negra, who had been formerly Minister to the United States from Mexico. The entire building, which was furnished, was at the disposal of the Club, and supplied most of the plant with which the Club began housekeeping. Handsome dinners were given, and almost every person of distinction who visited Mexico during its occupation were put up at the Club, and so popular did it become that after it was fairly in working order admission was rather difficult. The building occupied was located on one of the streets leading out of the Calle Plateros, and but two blocks from the Grand Plaza, a most convenient situation, and not far from the headquarters of General Scott, Commander-in-Chief.

It may interest you to learn that the Calle Plateros, or Silver-smith Street, is one of the most prominent in the city, and

corresponds with our Broadway. It has more fine shops upon it than any other in Mexico, hence it is the popular promenade and driving street, and the resort of the fashionable young men, who there have the opportunity of meeting their fair friends. Many of the principal hotels and restaurants are located upon it and its extension—for in Mexico the streets often change their names every second block. To reach the Alameda or principal park, or the Paseo, the fashionable drive, one is likely to pass through the Calle Plateros.

Personally I did not become a member of this Club while in Mexico, although solicited to do so, as I and most of my regiment were quartered, during much of our stay in the valley, in Tacubya, some five or six miles away from the city, and under these circumstances the Club would have been of little service to a second lieutenant who was closely confined to his company duties, whose only income was his monthly pay of \$65.50, and to whom a dollar looked about "the size of a cart-wheel." This simile I borrow from a captain of the Fourth Infantry, who used to call up his little son and ask him how big a dollar looked to a second lieutenant, and the little fellow would put on a quizzical look and say, "About the size of a cart-wheel!"

The records of the Club show that liquors and cigars were pretty freely indulged in, as the sales sometimes reached as high as \$100 per day, and, as before stated, the restaurant was fairly well patronized; but the greater share of the company officers lived in their company messes; officers detached from regimental or company duty were the principal frequenters of the Club restaurant.*

And now a brief reference to Hernando Cortez. It is not my purpose to tell you of the conquest of Mexico. This has

* At the time the "Army of Occupation" left Mexico the Aztec Club numbered 166 members.

Of these there are living, about.....	27
Mexican war officers, army, navy, and marines, since elected and now living, about.....	37
Associate members, and successors to members elected and liv- ing, about.....	136
Total approximate strength of Club	200

been done in such a fascinating way by Prescott and other writers that it would be presumption on my part to attempt it, but of the wonderful man, Hernando Cortez, who first entered Mexico and conquered the Aztecs, it seems appropriate to say something. It is well known that he set sail on his expedition from the island of Cuba in the latter part of the year 1518, after encountering innumerable difficulties and all sorts of obstacles, including that of the jealousy of the governor, Velasquez, who had intrusted him with command. He reached the Mexican coast early in 1519, and touching at various places, finally effected a permanent landing, April 21, 1519, at a point near the site of the present city of Vera Cruz, and a little later established himself at a place to the north of the present city, which he called Villa Rica de Vera Cruz. The Vera Cruz of to-day was not settled and incorporated until 1615.

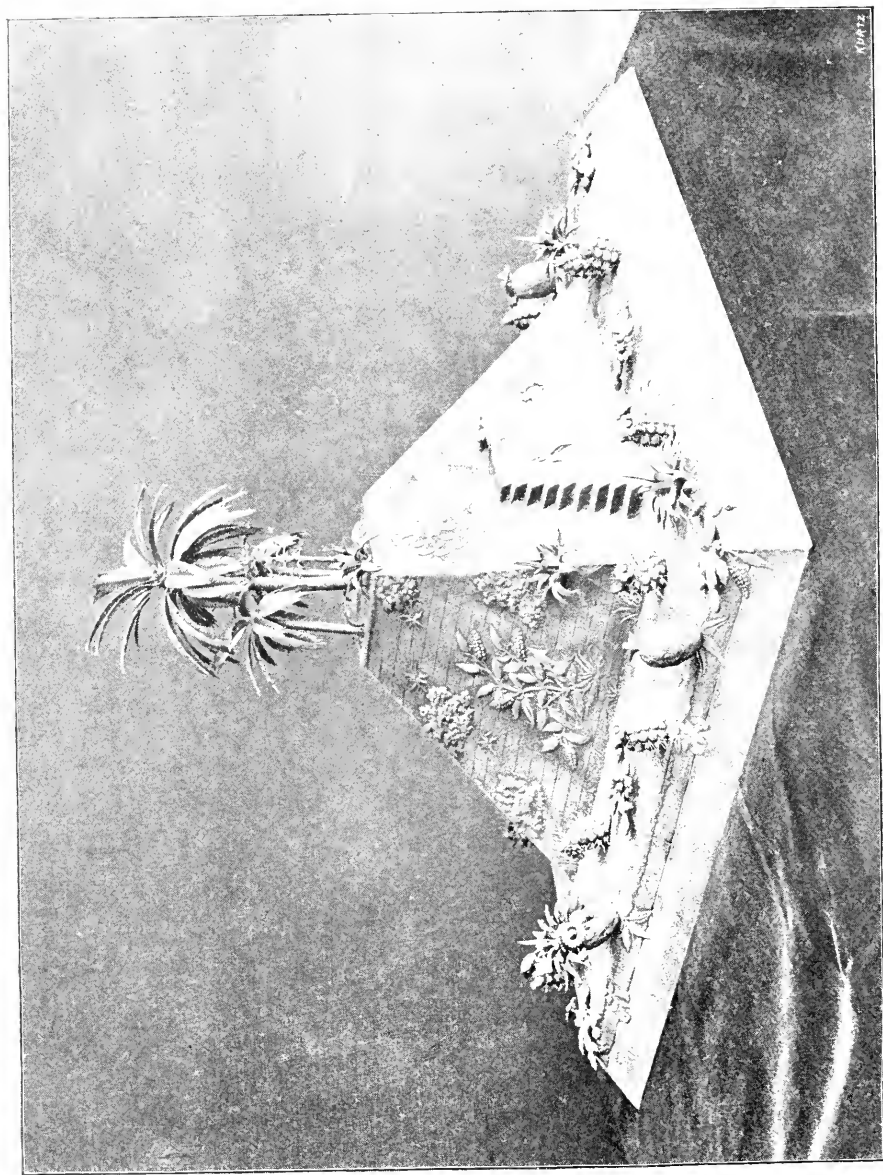
Almost immediately upon landing he made friendly overtures to the natives, and by the aid of their well-organized system of couriers communicated with their emperor in the Valley of Mexico, and asked permission to visit him at his capital. Cortez had been only a short time in camp when he was waited upon by an embassy from Montezuma, whose empire extended from the Valley of Mexico to the Gulf. The embassy, consisting of two Aztec nobles, was accompanied by the governor of the province and a hundred slaves, who bore rich gifts from the Mexican monarch; and with the view of showing the progress this people had made in manufactures and the arts, I give the list of articles as detailed by Prescott :

“ They were of the most miscellaneous kind ; shields, helmets, cuirasses, embossed with plates and ornaments of pure gold ; collars and bracelets of the same metal, sandals, fans, panaches, and crests of variegated feathers, intermingled with gold and rich thread, and sprinkled with pearls and precious stones ; imitations of birds and animals in wrought and cast gold and silver of exquisite workmanship ; curtains, coverlets, and robes of cotton, fine as silk, of rich and various dyes, interwoven with featherwork that rivalled the delicacy of painting. There were more than thirty loads of cotton cloth in addition.” A load for a Mexican bearer or porter was from fifty to sixty pounds. “ Among the articles sent, and which excited the

most admiration from the Spaniards, were two circular plates of gold and silver as large as carriage wheels; one, representing the sun, was richly carved with plants and animals, no doubt denoting the Aztec Century." It was thirty palms in circumference, and was valued at 20,000 pesos de ore—the value of a peso de ore at that date in our currency being about equivalent to \$11.67. Such a display of rich wares, added to the abundance of gold, naturally increased the cupidity of the Spaniards, but it also gave evidence of a people that was far advanced, and many regarded it as foolhardy, with their limited force, to make the attempt of advancing into the interior, especially in view of the opposition of Montezuma, who had expressed himself through his embassy as opposed to their coming. But Cortez, with his indomitable will and determined spirit, decided that the object of his expedition had not been completed and that they must go forward. This brought forth murmurings from his people, and fearing that they might take to the ships and return, he decided to burn his transports and thus prevent their turning back. It was a bold measure, but by appealing to their pride, and the probabilities of possessing a country which was so rich in precious metals, he was able to conquer their fears, and preparations were made for the march to the interior.

With the details of this march I will not delay you. Professor Henry Coppée, one of the oldest and most active members of this Club, has, in a paper read before the Military Service Institution of the United States, painted in his most charming style many of the incidents of this campaign, and has most successfully pointed out the many coincidents between the march of Cortez and that made in 1847, three hundred and twenty-seven years later, by the American army under General Winfield Scott, at that time Commander-in-Chief of the United States forces, and a splendid specimen of the cultured soldier and gentleman.

Both armies marched over nearly the same route toward the capital. Leaving the *tierra caliente*, with its pestilential climate and innumerable pests, in the form of mosquitoes, wood-ticks, and other insects, it entered the garden-land of Jalapa and into what is known as the *tierra templada*, and a



CENTRE-PIECE (AN ANCIENT AZTEC TEOCALLI), PRESENTED TO THE AZTEC CLUB.

still further rise brought them to the high table-lands of Puebla and near the present city of that name. Here Cortez halted, not only to refresh his little army, but he was here opposed by the Tlascalans, a warlike people who had never submitted to the rule of Montezuma. The Tlascalans were bold warriors, and with a large force opposed the march of Cortez, making repeated charges upon his little band; but the skill of the Spanish commander, combined with the use of cannon and firearms, and aided by his little troop of cavalry, gained the day, and eventually resulted not only in their submission but in forming an alliance with the Spaniards against their enemy, the Aztecs.

The entrance of Cortez into Tlascala was a royal one, and its inhabitants turned out in great numbers to greet the Spaniards, to whom they presented wreaths of roses; their houses were hung with flowers, and arches of boughs were thrown across the streets. Cortez, in writing to the emperor, speaks of the greatness of the city, and compares it with Granada under the Moors. The population of the city must have been large, as it is repeatedly asserted that thirty thousand souls were often gathered in the market on a public day.

From Tlascala he proceeded to Cholula, which he had been invited to visit through the chief men of the city, and although it lay off the direct road to the Mexican capital, he decided to inspect this great commercial emporium, the inhabitants of which excelled in the manufacture of cotton and agave cloths, and also in working in metals and pottery. I will not detain you with the details of his visit to the Cholulans, or of the attempt there made to decoy him into a snare, and thus destroy his entire party, nor of the heavy retribution that followed its discovery. It was in this city that the Spaniards saw the great pyramid of Cholula, one of the very largest of the empire, a more detailed account of which I give further on.

His march from Cholula to the capital city of the Aztecs was not further opposed, and by invitation of Montezuma he led his force of Spanish troops and Tlascalan allies directly into the heart of the city, and was quartered in the vicinity of the great teocalli, which, with its surroundings, occupied the

present grand square of the City of Mexico, and some of the adjoining streets.

And now it seems time to speak of the *teocalli*, or religious temples, which were widely distributed throughout the Aztec dominions, and form one of the chief objects of interest in our remarks this evening. Translated literally, *teocalli* means house of a God ("teotl, a god; calli, a house").

These *teocalli* or Mexican temples were very numerous; there were often hundreds in the principal cities, and, to aid in your better understanding of their construction, I give Prescott's description of them: "They were solid masses of earth, covered with brick or stone, and in their form resembled the pyramidal structures of ancient Egypt. The bases of many of them were more than a hundred feet square; the great temple in the City of Mexico was said to have been about three hundred feet, and they towered to a great height. They were distributed into four or five stories, each of smaller dimensions than that below. The ascent was by a flight of steps at an angle of the pyramid on the outside. This led to a sort of terrace or gallery at the base of the second story, which passed quite around the building to another flight of stairs, commencing also at the same angle as the preceding one, and directly over it, and leading to a similar terrace, so that one had to make the circuit of the temple several times before reaching the summit. In some instances the stairway led directly up the centre of the western face of the building." The model before you may be taken to represent one of the latter class. "The top was a broad area on which were erected one or two towers, forty or fifty feet high. These were the sanctuaries which contained the sacred images of the presiding deities. Before these towers stood the dreadful stone of sacrifice, and two lofty altars on which fires were kept, as inextinguishable as those in the temple of Vesta. There were said to be six hundred of these altars on smaller buildings within the inclosure of the great temple of Mexico, which, with those on the sacred edifices of other parts of the city, shed a brilliant illumination over its streets through the darkest night."

The number of priests connected with these temples was enormous, and in the great temple of the City of Mexico they

were estimated as high as five thousand. It was the high-priest who performed the service of sacrifice; for this purpose the temple was surmounted by a large block of stone, that in the great temple of Mexico was of jasper, which had a convex surface, and when the victim was laid upon it the breast was raised, which enabled the priest to perform his work with greater ease. There is a good specimen of this stone now in the museum of the City of Mexico. The breast of the victim was cut open by the aid of a sharp razor of itzli, or obsidian, the hand thrust into the wound, and the heart torn out, which, hot and reeking, was deposited on a golden censer before the idol. The body of the slaughtered victim was then hurled down the steep stairs of the pyramid, and the remains were gathered up by the multitude beneath, who prepared with them the cannibal repast. The number of these sacrifices within the empire is given at figures that stagger belief, but scarcely any author estimates the yearly sacrifices at less than twenty thousand, while others give the numbers at fifty thousand. At the dedication of the great temple of Huitsilopochtli, the Mexican war-god, 1486, and for which the prisoners taken in battle had been for several years reserved, it is said that seventy thousand captives perished at the shrine of this deity. This seems incredible, but it is attested by the best authors. It is stated that one of Cortez's soldiers counted the skulls, which it was customary to preserve in one of the edifices attached to the great temple, and that they numbered one hundred and thirty-six thousand. This is given by Bernal Diaz, and this faithful soldier is generally accredited with telling the truth—at least, his narrative so impressed me. Furthermore, he wrote his narrative forty-nine years after the conquest, and at his mature age he was not likely to be very far wrong in his statements. The present cathedral in the *plaza mayor* of the City of Mexico stands on the same site that was occupied by the great Aztec temple, and its foundation is believed to be formed from the images of their various deities.

But do not imagine, from what I have above related, that these people were cannibals; for, while their religious ceremonies authorized their feasting upon the bodies of those that they had sacrificed to their gods, they would not under other

conditions partake of human flesh ; and Diaz, in describing the appearance of the City of Mexico after its capture, says that he had never seen a place where there were so many weak and sickly men, women, and children, who were famishing for the want of food. The ground had been dug up to get at the roots of such vegetation as it afforded, and the trees were stripped of their bark ; but in the midst of all this distress there was no evidence that they had in a single instance preyed upon each other.

My own observations of these Aztec temples were limited ; during the stay at Puebla of General Worth's division, to which my regiment belonged, I visited the one at Cholula, dedicated to Quetzalcoatl, the god of air. This enormous mound of earth and brick has a perpendicular height of 177 feet, and covers an area of about forty-four acres, and the platform on the top covers more than one acre. The date of its construction is unknown, as the Aztecs found it there when they entered on the plateau of Puebla. Humboldt gives a good illustration of the size of this *teocalli* by comparing it to a mass of bricks covering a square four times as large as the Place Vendome at Paris, and of twice the height of the Louvre. The view from its summit is superb ; to the west lies the chain of mountains which incloses the Valley of Mexico, and standing in their midst are those splendid snow-peaks, Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl (white woman), and nearer, the beautiful-shaped Sierra de la Malinche, which bears the outline of a recumbent female figure ; at your feet is seen the splendid and fertile plateau of Puebla, bountifully watered, and yielding the best wheat in the country.

On another occasion, and after the fall of Mexico, while the army was occupying the valley and awaiting the negotiations which were then pending for peace, a party of officers, escorted by a detail of cavalry under Major Sibley, made an expedition to the south of the city and past the valley of Cuernavaca and so on to the cave of Cacauamilpa, one of the most interesting excursions I have ever made. On this trip we passed the ruins of an ancient *teocalli*, which surmounted a hill that was terraced ; in this instance the Aztecs had chosen a natural mound and on it erected the temple of sacrifice. The rock-work was

entire, and the steps, which were still in position, were placed in the face of the temple, similar to the one you have before you; and, like it, growing from the base, sides, and summit were shrubs and plants which were found in tropical Mexico. The rock-work was smoothly cut and closely joined, and from a casual inspection I should say the material was of granite. The terraces of the hill or mountain were very distinct, and served the same purposes in the Aztecs' religious ceremonies as the various stories of their temples which the Spaniards found in the cities of Mexico, viz., in the display of their victims as they were led along the mountain side up to the place of sacrifice.

Having given at some length an account of their teocallis and some of the ceremonies attending their religious and superstitious rites, let us turn to a more pleasing and agreeable picture of Aztec character, which, apart from the usages which their religion inspired, possessed many of the characteristics of a civilized community.

Of the early origin of this people little is positively known, but their first home has been placed in New Mexico at a point called Aztlan. Be it there or in more remote regions, it is firmly claimed that they came from the north, and according to an oracle were to wander until they beheld perched upon the stem of a prickly pear, which grew from the crevice of a rock, a splendid specimen of the royal eagle with a serpent in its talons and with wings expanded. This, tradition says, they found in Lake Tezcuco, in the Valley of Mexico, and there they laid the foundation of their city by sinking piles, on which they erected light structures of reeds and rushes. This took place about the year 1325.

The place was called Tenochtitlan, from its miraculous origin, though only known to the Spaniards by its other name of Mexico, derived from the war-god, Mexitli. This legend of the city's foundation is further commemorated by the device of the eagle and cactus being adopted as the arms of modern Mexico.

And here I wish to digress for a moment and give my personal experience of the refreshing nature of the *tuna*, or fruit of the prickly pear. The morning drill hours, while my regi-

ment, the Fourth Infantry, was stationed in the City of Mexico, were usually from 9 A. M. until 11 A. M., or even later, nearly half an hour being consumed in marching to and from the drill ground; and on our return to quarters, which were in the Hospital Terceros, near the Mineria, or College of Mines, I often resorted to a fruit-stand near by and ate a dozen or more of the juicy tunas, which I found most refreshing after the fatigue of a long, hot drill, the Mexican who served me cutting the fruit open and presenting it so that I effectually avoided all the prickles with which the outer surface is so well guarded.

Let us now take a glance at the form of government of the Aztecs; their laws, judicial system, and method of raising the revenues which supported the state. Prescott tells us that the sovereign was selected from the brothers of the late ruler, or, in default of them, from his nephews and from among those who had distinguished themselves in battle. The new monarch was installed with great pomp. The captives that he had taken in battle served not only to swell the procession into the capital, but also to furnish victims for the religious ceremonies.

The power of the monarch was absolute, and all laws emanated from him, and were executed by judges appointed by the crown, who retained their offices during good behavior, and who were held responsible with their lives for the faithful execution of their high trust. To receive presents or a bribe was punishable with death. The various laws of the Aztecs were registered and exhibited to the people through their hieroglyphical paintings; a capital sentence was indicated by a line traced with an arrow across the portrait of the accused.

Slavery was permitted, but there were various grades of it; those taken prisoners in war were almost always reserved for sacrifice. There were other classes of slaves—criminals, public debtors, persons who from poverty gave up their freedom, and children sold by their parents, owing to their inability to maintain them; in most of the latter cases the slavery was mild in form.

The revenues for the support of the monarch and his sur-



ANCIENT AZTEC IDOL AND KNIFE FROM THE CITY OF MEXICO.

roundings, as also for the various departments of government, were partially derived from the crown lands, and in part by taxes. Those from the public lands were usually paid in kind, and large granaries were established for the storing of these revenues. While the places in the vicinity of the capital were bound to supply workmen for the king, they were also required to furnish fuel, provisions, and whatever was required for the maintenance of his household. There was also a tax on the various manufactures of the kingdom, which tribute was paid in kind, and consisted of a great variety of articles, such as cotton dresses, ornaments, arms and utensils of copper, grain, fruits, cochineal, cacao, mats, etc.

Communication was kept up with the most remote parts of the empire by means of couriers, and post-houses were established along the main routes, about six miles apart. The courier, bearing his despatches in the form of hieroglyphical paintings, ran with them to the first station, where they were taken by another messenger and carried forward to another stage; by this means despatches were often carried two hundred miles per day, and it is said that fresh fish were served at Montezuma's table twenty-four hours after they were taken from the Gulf of Mexico.

One of the most interesting subjects in connection with this remarkable people were their hieroglyphics, or picture writings, which in the New World correspond to those of the Egyptians in the Old, although the former were of a greatly inferior order. Imperfect as they were, they seem to have met the demands of the nation and been able to record their laws; their rolls, which gave the taxes imposed upon the various towns; their mythology, calendars, and rituals; and, taken with the oral instruction given by the priests, who instructed the youth in history, arithmetic, astronomy, mythology, etc., completed what may be termed the literature of the Aztecs.

The manuscripts were made of various materials, sometimes of cotton cloth, or of skins nicely prepared; but the chief part was from the leaves of the aloe, which they called *maguety*. Out of this was made a species of paper resembling the Egyptian papyrus, which, when properly dressed, resembled parchment. Some of these manuscripts, still extant, show their

original brilliant colors. The numbers existing at the time of the conquest were very large, especially in Tezcuco, the most cultivated of the Aztec cities, but, owing to the fanaticism of the Spanish priests, large numbers of these works were collected and piled up in a "mountain heap," and reduced to ashes.

A few of the Mexican manuscripts have found their way to Europe, and are carefully preserved in public libraries and museums. The most valuable of them is known as the Mendoza Codex, or Mendoza Manuscript, which is now in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, England, and is claimed to be veritable Aztec work. Its importance is due to the light it gives of the history of the nation, the tributes paid by the various cities, and the domestic economy of the Aztecs. It may be of interest to note that this manuscript has had a most eventful history. It was sent, shortly after the conquest, by the Viceroy Mendoza as a present to Charles the Fifth, but the vessel that was conveying it was captured by a French cruiser, and the manuscript taken to Paris, where it was purchased by the chaplain of the English legation, who doubtless recognized its great value. The most important of these Mexican manuscripts extant have been brought together in the valuable work of Lord Kingsborough, who gives both a Spanish and English interpretation of them.

The Aztecs were well advanced in agriculture, and all but the great nobles and soldiers were engaged in cultivating the soil. The chief toil was done by the men, but the women performed the lighter work, such as sowing the seed, husking the corn, and similar duties.

In connection with the resources of the country and the supplies which it was capable of furnishing, I add what the conquerors saw on their first visit to the grand square of Mexico. This is given at some length. They were astonished at the crowds of people, and at the amount of merchandise that was collected and for sale, and all arranged with such great regularity. They note some of the articles, such as gold, silver, feathers, mantles, chocolate, and various kinds of skins, dressed and undressed. At some places in the square, women sold fresh fish, and at other points there were collections of earthen

ware and wooden household furniture for sale. The meat-market was stocked with fowls, game, and dogs, vegetables and fruit, and articles of food already prepared. Sweet pastry was also sold, and around the sides of the great square, under piazzas, were stored large quantities of grain, and there were, besides, shops for the sale of various kinds of goods. The noise and bustle attending this barter and trading could be heard at a long distance, and several of the Spaniards, who had been at Constantinople and Rome, said, "that for convenience and regularity they had never seen the like."

We know they were well skilled in irrigation, and their irrigating ditches attested that they never made the attempt of forcing water to run up-hill, as has been found in some of the improperly constructed ditches of the mining regions of our country. The City of Mexico was supplied with fresh water from Chapultepec and beyond, by much the same system as at the present day, as the conquerors state that, on entering the city, "they saw the aqueduct of Chapultepec from the top of the great temple."

One of the important articles which we owe to Mexico is the cacao, the fruit of which furnishes the chocolate, and takes its name from the Mexican word *chocalatl*, and which is now so extensively grown throughout the West Indies. In its manufactured form it furnishes the mildest and one of the most healthful beverages of the day. It is a little singular that this article should have found its way into England about the same date as tea and coffee—viz., about the year 1650—tea having been brought by the Dutch from China, and coffee introduced from Abyssinia by way of Constantinople.

But the great staple of the country was Indian corn, and the Aztecs were as skilful in its preparation as any of the cooks of more modern times. All of us who took part in the second conquest can well recall the groups of market-women who established themselves in various sections of the Mexican capital, and in the early morning sold, especially to the laboring class, the thin corn-cakes called tortillas, together with chili colorado con carné, or, to translate, corn cakes with meat and red peppers.

The maguey, or agave Americana, entered very largely into

their agricultural products, as before noted ; its leaves furnished a paste from which paper was made ; its juice, when fermented, became an intoxicating beverage of which the natives of the present day are very fond, and I have seen in recent years entire train loads of it, in casks, being transported into the City of Mexico.

The process of gathering the juice of the maguey, or century plant, is noticeable, and as I often saw the Mexicans about Tacubya and in the vicinity of the bloody battlefield of Molino del Rey engaged in this work, I venture to give their method. In the first place, the central stalk of the plant is cut off, and a cavity hollowed in the receptacle, or central part of the plant ; into this the juice from the other stalks or fatty leaves flows. The native, provided with a cured pigskin, which is held in a netted bag, with a long, hollow gourd sucks the juice from the cavity, and, applying his finger to the lower end of the gourd to prevent the juice from running out, turns the juice into the pigskin, covers over the cavity in the plant to prevent the dirt getting into it, and then goes on to the next. In many instances these plants form the hedges of the various fields ; in others they are planted in regular rows and the entire field taken up by them.

The juice of this plant when first collected has a sweetish taste, but does not possess any stimulating qualities. In a short time, however, it undergoes fermentation, when it acquires sufficient alcohol to produce intoxication. When distilled it becomes a fiery liquor that we found had a most hurtful effect upon our soldiers. The Mexicans call this liquor mescal, but our men soon gave it the name of rascal, which tersely describes its injurious effects upon the brain.

Prior to the introduction of railways, this article reached the capital in hogskins transported on the backs of mules or donkeys. The latter very hardy and useful animal was greatly in use at the time General Scott conquered the country, and as an exemplification of their endurance, Ulysses S. Grant, at that time lieutenant and regimental quartermaster of the Fourth Infantry, told me that he had seen a heavily loaded army wagon accidentally run over one of these animals, which was lying down with its pack on, and that, after being assisted up

and unloaded, it merely shook itself and began munching the grass near at hand.

Of the other uses to which the maguey was applied, its leaves furnished an excellent thatch for the cabins of the humbler class; a thread was produced from its strong fibre and made into a coarse cloth; pins and needles were made from the thorns at the ends of its leaves; and the root, when properly cooked, became a nutritious and palatable vegetable.

The Aztecs understood the art of making bronze, and from it fashioned tools for the working of the hardest minerals, and their sculptured images were so numerous that even at the present day numbers are found in different parts of the empire. Two good specimens of their work in bas-relief, one of the last Montezuma and the other of his father, were cut in the solid rock at the groves at Chapultepec and were standing as late as 1754. But the most remarkable piece of sculptured work is the great calendar stone, which was dug up in 1790 and is now built into the lower wall of the cathedral in the City of Mexico. From it is learned that the Aztecs could fix the hours of the day as well as the solstices and equinoxes; and also the passage of the sun across the meridian of Mexico.

I have already spoken of some of the articles produced through their handiwork. The art in which they most excelled was *plumaje*, or feather-work, the rich plumage of the tropical birds furnishing material for fashioning the most exquisite patterns, which were pasted on fine cotton web and made into dresses for the wealthy class. Specimens of these fabrics, which were sent to Europe by the conquerors, excited more admiration than any other articles coming from the New World. An aged Aztec chief's advice to his son shows that trade was honorable and highly esteemed; I quote it: "Apply thyself, my son, to agriculture, or to feather-work, or some other honorable calling. Thus did your ancestors before you, else how would they have provided for themselves and their families? Never was it heard that nobility alone was able to maintain its possessor."

In their domestic life and manners they exhibited a degree of refinement and elegance unlooked for in a rude people. The women, alike with the men, shared in their social entertain-

ments and festivities, which were often on a large scale. The halls were scented with perfumes and the courts filled with fragrant flowers, which were distributed among the guests as they arrived, and napkins and urns of water were set before them just before and after eating. Tobacco was used at the end of the feast, as at the present day; the Aztecs called it *yctli*. The word tobacco, it may be mentioned, is of Haytian origin and was spelled *tabacco*.

Game, especially the turkey, was largely used at their repasts. At the time of the conquest the Spaniards saw large numbers of these birds in a domesticated state among the Aztecs, and, as we have before noted, they formed one of the staple articles in the payment of taxes in kind. By Europeans it has been thought that, owing to its name, the turkey came from the East, but we all know that on the settlement of this continent the bird was found distributed from the northern part of the United States to Panama. Benjamin Franklin gave it the preference to the bald eagle as our national emblem, and I am disposed to agree with him. I must speak in this connection of an incident in our Mexican War that was at least amusing. During the fighting in the streets of the City of Mexico a recruit came across a turkey buzzard, which he shot, thinking he had secured a real turkey, and with the bird attached to his belt wandered into the College of Mines. When the students saw him they were immensely amused and burst into an uproar of laughter.

Bernal Diaz, in his account of the household and daily life of Montezuma, describes at some length one of his repasts, and says: "The ordinary meats were domestic fowls, pheasants, geese, partridges, quails, venison, Indian hogs, pigeons, hares, rabbits, and many other birds and animals common to the country, and his cooks possessed the art of serving them in thirty different modes. Fruit of various kinds was placed before the emperor, and, as an after-course, a stimulating liquor prepared from cocoa was served.

"The repast was varied by the introduction of singers and dancers, and also certain hump-backed and deformed Indians, who played tricks and made jests. This was followed by a few whiffs from little reeds containing a mixture of amber and

tobacco, and then a short siesta." The numbers of his guards and domestics that were served after the emperor exceeded one thousand, and the household of women and inferior servants that were fed was prodigious. Pulque formed one of the beverages of these repasts, but was chiefly indulged in by the older men. Intoxication was severely punished when it occurred among the young men at the feast.

As an erroneous impression seems to obtain among some as to the physical aspect of the Aztecs at the time of the conquest, I give what I have gathered from the earliest writers. In many instances the persons of the chief men are described, and in most cases they are represented as tall of stature, strong and well proportioned, and with broad faces. Montezuma is reported of good stature and possessing what old Fuller quaintly calls a "handsome man-case," and with a fairer complexion than most Indians; he wore short hair just covering his ears, and his beard was black but thin; his face is described as long, and his features combined both gravity and good humor. "Guatimotzin, his successor, was of noble appearance both in person and countenance; his features large and cheerful, eyes lively, and complexion very fair for an Indian. His wife was a niece of Montezuma, and was young and very handsome." I can testify to the physical condition of the descendants of the Aztecs in 1847; for many of them were remarkable as bearers or porters, and would come into the City of Mexico, from miles away, with a pack or load upon their backs which astonished most of us.

This is a brief outline of the laws, arts, customs, and usages of this remarkable people, which I have gathered from Prescott, Bernal Diaz, and other writers; a nation which, while inferior to the Tezcucans, their near neighbors, in intellectual culture and social refinement, was composed of a hardy and warlike people, who, from rude beginnings, in the course of two centuries extended their empire from the Valley of Mexico to the Gulf on the east, and to Honduras and Guatemala on the south. All this was not effected unaided, as they formed with their neighbors, the Tezcucans and Tlacopans, that remarkable alliance which has no parallel in history. In this agreement it was stipulated that the nations above named should support

each other in their wars, offensive and defensive, and that in the distribution of the spoil one-fifth should be given the Tlacopans, and the remainder divided among the other powers; and during the century of continuous warfare that ensued, no instance is related where the parties quarrelled over the division of the spoil.

In closing this hurried account of the Aztecs, I cannot avoid expressing my great satisfaction, and I am sure I but echo your own, to the promoters of this Club, who chose so appropriately the name of a people who had made such great progress in manufactures and art, and who ruled so wisely and discreetly as to raise themselves far above the North American Indian, and almost to a level with the nations of the far East. If to this be added the brilliant military records of so many of our past and present members, surely have we reason to glory in being Aztecs.

At the close of Colonel Floyd-Jones's address, Professor Henry Coppée, of the Lehigh University, an original member of the Club, was called upon to answer, which he did in the following happy manner:

Friends and Comrades :

When Davy Jones*—I beg his pardon, I mean Colonel De Lancey Floyd-Jones—wrote that address, he didn't mean the person who was to answer it to have much chance; he has used all the thunder and covered the field with teocalli ruins. So when Fitz-John Porter—I beg his pardon, too, I mean General Porter, our President—selected me to answer him he may have thought he was doing me an honor and a kindness; but, I dare say, many of the fellows present are very glad that he did not ask them; and yet, Mr. President, there is something to be said, and I do esteem it a pleasure and an honor to respond.

There is such a thing as eloquent silence, and this beautiful centre-piece, considered as a memento, speaks for itself more effectively than any poor words of mine. The old ruin sug-

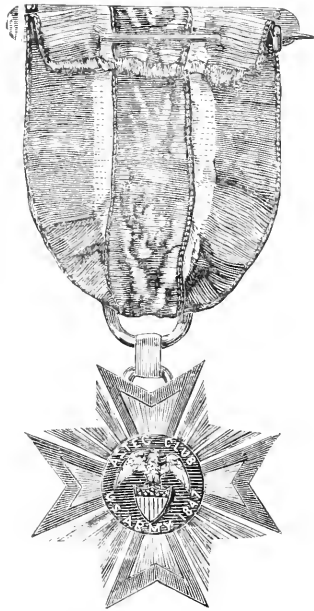
* Davy Jones was Colonel Floyd-Jones's nickname at the United States Military Academy.

gests the days of Cortez, Bernal Diaz, and Alvarado of the Leap. The royal palm growing out of its ruined top calls us back to the time when its spreading leaves made tessellations of shade in the charming moonlight, only broken by the silhouettes of the lovely successors of the Aztec maidens and the glamour of tropical love-making.

The maguey clustered at its base makes one long for *pulque*, whether in redolent pigskins or in bottles. I repeat, Mr. President, our friend Floyd-Jones has covered himself with pride and glory. Being of a jealous disposition, I envy him the sentiments which led to this present, and the great satisfaction, which I am sure we can all see by his smiles, he is experiencing in our reception of it. I think that we ought to sing, "He's a Jolly Good Fellow," and give him three times three—but not, if you please, until I get through. That I am just about to do, however. Let me gravely point him out to our younger members as an excellent example. Young gentlemen, we want but one Aztec pyramid, and we now have it, with the proud knowledge that there is not another like it in this country; but if any one desires to present a silver punch-bowl or a loving cup, or some other silver token and souvenir, the Aztec Club of 1847 is by no means arrogant, but will accept such gracious gifts with becoming recognition, and use them with generous bumpers. Mr. President, in the language of Spanish orators, "I have said." "*He dicho!*"

To the toast, "The Younger Members of the Aztec Club," Mr. Graham Frost, of St. Louis, responded, and made an admirable speech, which was greatly applauded. This was followed by brief remarks from Mr. J. Watts Kearney and Mr. Charles Biddle, both of whom spoke of the interest which the younger comrades of the Club have in its present success and in its perpetuity, sentiments which were warmly received. General Tower responded to the toast "To General Winfield Scott," and gave some very interesting incidents connected with the battles in the Valley of Mexico, closing with a handsome tribute to the great commander and cultured gentleman. Colonel Thomas Y. Field, of the Marine Corps, made some entertaining remarks on the attack on the Belen and San

Cosmo gates, and concluded with a very high tribute to the Aztec Club as viewed from his standpoint. Admiral Rhind, in some short remarks, spoke of the part taken by the navy and Marine Corps in the conquest of Mexico, and indicated by his vigorous language that he is fully of the opinion that the marines are worthy of all praise in their past and present faithful work. Brief speeches were also made by Generals Porter, Frost, and Van Vliet, and the guests, after singing several stanzas of "Benny Havens, Oh," gradually dispersed, feeling that the evening had been a most enjoyable one, and looking forward with interest to another equally pleasant meeting, with full ranks, in October, 1893.





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